THE DRUMBEAT
Student media since 1927
Tyler Junior College

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Australia Fires on Page 6

"1917" on Page 7

Sign up for Apache Alert

Illustration by Cecilia Kohl

Students can opt-in to campus activities, weather, more

By Zac Brooks
Editor-in-Chief

Severe weather season, which is March through May, is rapidly approaching. According to CBS 19, the 2019 severe weather season was "more active than usual in East Texas." However, the report stated this "is not something that is unexpected for our region." Recently Tyler Junior College students have received notifications for severe weather through the college's alert system.

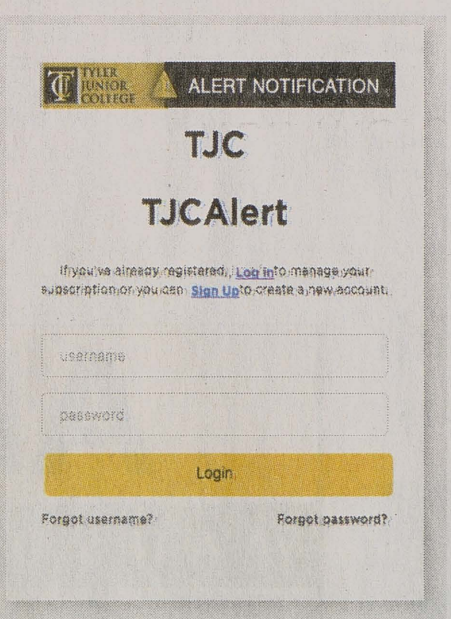
TJC's Apache Alert System notifies students on weather alerts, security threats, on-campus activities and more. According to TJC's emergency procedures, "the Immediate Notification System and Apache Alerts text-messaging systems allow TJC to provide immediate notification to faculty, staff and students in the event of a campus security, crime or weather-related emergency." There are almost 25,000 people enrolled, said TJC police Chief Michael Seale.

In 1990, the Department of Education passed a law known as the Crime Awareness and Security Act of 1990. This law states students, parents and staff have the right to know about important information, whether it be bad weather or criminal mischief. According to the U.S. Department of Education, "The department is committed to ensuring that postsecondary institutions are in full compliance with that act, and enforcement of the act is a priority of the department."

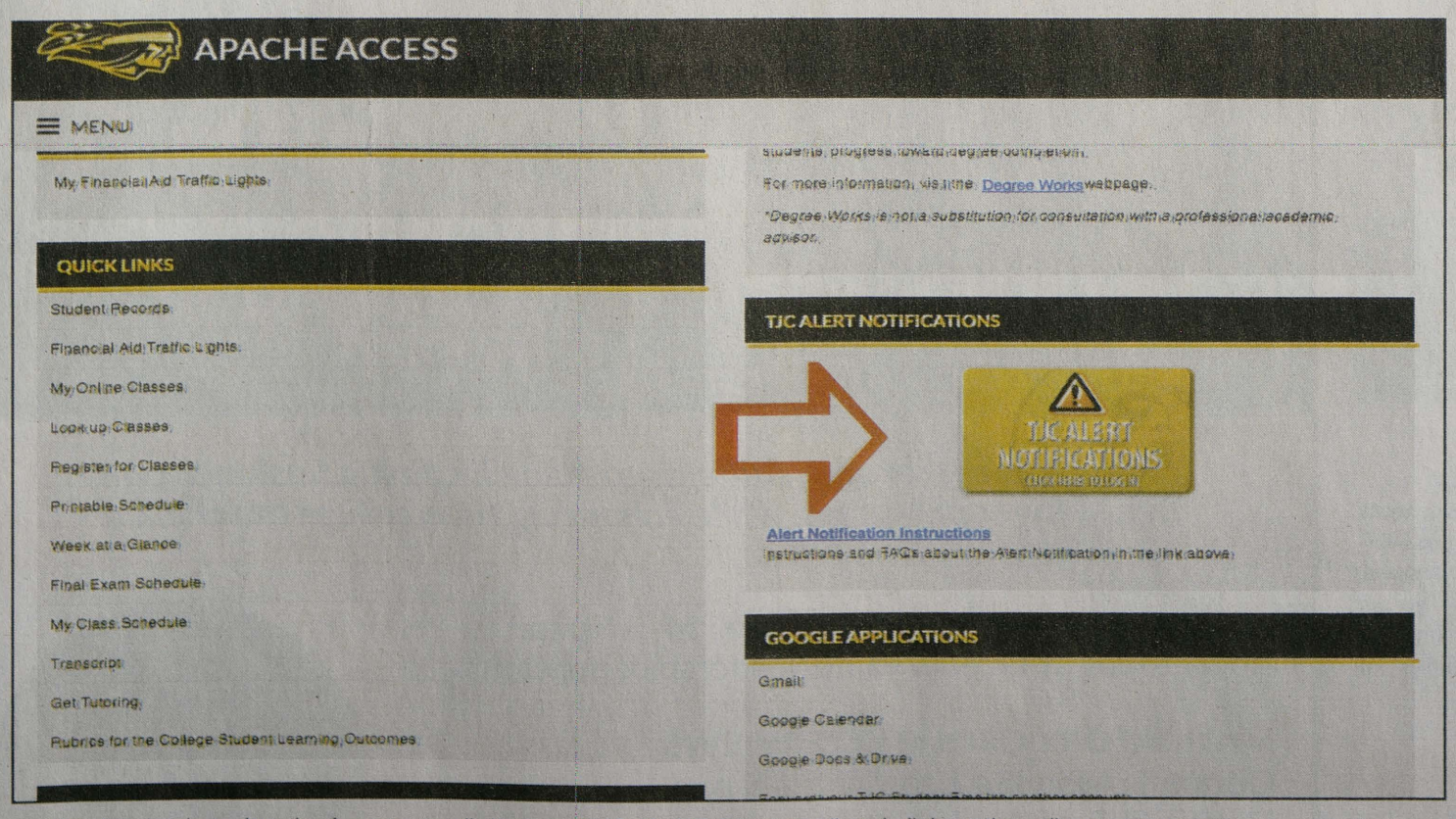
Currently, TJC's alert system is an opt-in system, meaning students must manually sign up for the alert system. Opt-out systems that automatically enroll users are available. Director of Public Affairs Rebecca Sanders said, "other alert systems are being researched to see if there is a better solution for TJC. If the college moves forward with a new system or makes changes to the current system, students and employees will be informed about opting in or out for notifications."

To sign up for Apache Alerts, log in to Apache Access. In the middle of the homepage there is a block that states "TJC Alert Notification." The instructions should be in blue. Click the hyperlink and follow the instructions to sign up. Students aren't limited to weather alerts. They can get notified about athletics, campus activities, different clubs and organizations, emergency notifications and IT alerts as well as residential hall activities.

The current system is not limited to email. "The students will receive alerts through text, email, social media, and the outdoor warning system in Ramey Tower," Seale said. "Once someone enrolls, they are active until they change their status in their account or until the system automatically expires them several years after signing up."



Create an account or log in to opt-in to the alert notification system.



After logging in to Apache Access, scroll down to "TJC Alert Notifications," and click on the yellow square.

Photo by Cassidy Winnborn
The League of Women Voters of Texas was on campus for a registration rally.

Register to vote

By Zac Brooks
Editor-in-Chief

Feb. 3 is the last day to register to vote. To register to vote, one can go to any government office, school or library to get a voter registration card. Then, fill it out and mail it to the address on the card.

People do not have to register with a certain party in advance. It won't cost anything to ship because it is a government document. From there, the government will send back a card that is proof of registration in the next 30 days.

Early voting for the primary election will be from Feb. 18-28. The primary election helps decide who will be running for the presidency for each party. The early election is in place to help with crowd control. It lets people vote early, so they don't have to do it on the actual day to vote. The actual day to vote is March 3.

Tyler Junior College recently held a voter registration rally on campus, where the League of Women Voters of Texas were in the Rogers Student Center to help students register to vote.

There are currently 17 democratic primary candidates and seven republican primary candidates.

Community marches in remembrance of Martin Luther King

Photo by LaKyndra Larkin
Young Girls with Purpose attended the Martin Luther King parade on Jan. 20. The organization promotes education and helps girls dream big and set goals with a successful outcome.

By LaKyndra Larkin
Contributing Writer

Hundreds gathered around the T. B. Butler Plaza in downtown Tyler to connect with others and share why Martin Luther King Day was important to them. With temperatures in the upper 30s, participants were bundled up in heavy coats, gloves and hats.

Many came together early Monday morning to highlight the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. at the 34th Annual Interfaith Community Program sponsored by Tyler Together Race Relations Forum.

Many organizations came out, including Young Girls with Purpose in Tyler founded by Debbie Broughton. The organization has been around for nine years and Broughton took the young girls ages 12-18 to the square to show what it is like to get involved in the community.

"One of our objectives is to involve the girls in the community and show what it is like to give back," Broughton said. "We are also here to celebrate the legacy of Dr. King."

Like Young Girls with Purpose, other organizations were delighting themselves in King's legacy such as East Texas Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays. The nonprofit organization "educates, advocates, and supports the LGBTQ community," said Brenda McWilliams, a representative for the organization.

"(This day means) inclusion and equality and diversity. We want to promote all these things in the community," McWilliams said.

She also said King's vision was more than black and white. It meant inclusion for everyone and equality for all, no matter their race or sexuality.

Shortly after gathering around the plaza, Ambra Philips,

MLK Parade Continued on Page 2

Tyler Junior College helps students in writing process

By Bailey Saulters
Contributing Writer

At some point during all Tyler Junior College students' academic careers, they will need to write an essay or a research paper. They might need to write multiple papers at one time for different classes. For many individuals it can be an exhausting task, either due to the sheer volume of research required for a topic or wondering if their papers hit the proper word count.

For some, they might not be sure where to start or how to format their papers appropriately. TJC offers students access to tutors to help students in any stage of the writing process.

Nicole Hicks, TJC's Writing Center specialist, explains the Writing Center is a place where students are welcomed to come and get help with any writing assignments on campus. Center staff members also help with any stage of the writing process.

For students who are not comfortable with approaching when needing help, Hicks said she understands the negative stigma attached to seeking out help from a tutor.

"That it is a matter only of people who are failing their classes or struggling to learn, but that is not true. Writing is not a solo process, every paper and every writer in the world can always improve," Hicks said.

The tutors in the Writing Center are most often fellow TJC students who have been freshmen and who have sat in the same classrooms wrestling with the same issues most have when writing.

One of the Writing Center's peer tutors, Jenny Dewease, said, "My first semester here I was terrified to come to the Writing Center because I always thought I was terrible at writing and they're going to judge me. The tutors here, they're very understanding. They will listen to you and actively look at your writing to see where it is that you need help."

Tutors work one-on-one with students in order to personally help them in whatever area they need. Both Hicks and Dewease encourage more students to stop by and ask for help.

The Writing Center is open from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday through Thursday; 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Friday; 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday; and 1 to 4 p.m. Sunday. The center is located on the second floor of the Vaughn Library. For more information, visit tjc.edu/info/20044/tutoring.

MLK Parade: Celebration promotes inclusivity, fellowship, inspiration for participants

From Page 1

an active supporter of TTRRF, shared the theme of the event:"Only in the darkness can you see the stars," which is a quote from King.

Every year, the organizations march down Broadway Avenue to the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception where a program is held. The John Tyler High School Band led the march, followed by the people representing their organizations. This was also the first year the Robert E. Lee High School Band joined the annual march.

Following the march was a program held in the Cathedral at 423 S. Broadway Ave. Bishop Nick McGrew called the program to order and explained that people are the light of the world and that they are also still a work in progress regarding King's vision.

City of Tyler Mayor Martin Heines has served for 10 years in Tyler and said he was proud of the community.

"There are so many good friends here and Tyler, Texas, is a better place because of your involvement," Heines said.

Keynote speaker Sha'Rell Webb, an educational specialist and science teacher, shared her story on how she got to where she is today despite her adversity.

"I've had some dark and dry times," she said through tears. "(but) I'm grateful because they made me into the woman I am today."

At age 2, she was adopted by her aunt and uncle because her mother was, and still is, addicted to cocaine and does not know her biological father. Although she experienced that at such a young age, she shared that the family home she grew up in was full of laughter and joy despite her circumstances.

By the time Webb left home to attend Jarvis Christian College, her aunt and uncle had already passed away. She felt alone in college because she had no one to check in on her and was four hours from home. She attempted suicide twice but after the failed attempts, she realized she's here for a reason and pursued a career in education.

Eventually she became a science educator and founded "Coding with a Twist." Her organization is available to her students she said were underestimated. "Coding with a Twist" gives the students hands on learning to science. With the organization, she is able to loan other organizations the technology they may not have access to or cannot afford for their own events.

"I'm on fire to inspire," Webb said, sharing her personal motto. "What you do now will determine your future." She ended her speech by saying to keep moving forward and reminded the crowd of the theme of the program.

By the laughs and fellowship following the program, many felt inspired on this day.

"I'm so glad a family of a friend invited me here today," Aleah Gilliam, 20, from University of Texas at Tyler, said. "I didn't even know Tyler does this, but I just feel so inspired and filled with a sense of hope for America. It's amazing the mark Dr. King left in his life we still celebrate today."

Photo by LaKyndra Larkin
The Robert E. Lee Band marches down South Broadway Avenue on Jan. 20 for the Martin Luther King parade. The parade ended at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception on Broadway Avenue.

Photo by LaKyndra Larkin
Brenda McWilliams (left) and Louanne Smoot (right) hold up the Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays banner at Jan. 20 at the T. B. Butler Plaza. The couple has been together 19 years and has been legally married for four.

Commentary: In memory of Kobe Bryant, daughter

By Zac Brooks
Editor-in-Chief

Tragedy struck early Jan. 26 as beloved basketball player, Kobe Bryant, died in a helicopter crash.

Those in the helicopter were Kobe Bryant, Gianna Bryant, Kobe Bryant's 13-year-old daughter; Orange Coast College baseball coach John Altobelli, his daughter Alyssa Altobelli, his wife Keri Altobelli; Christina Mauser, Sarah Chester, Payton Chester; and the pilot, Ara Zobayan. The country was in mourning after hearing of such news.

According to ESPN, the helicopter took off at 9:06 a.m. from John Wayne Airport in California. Kobe Bryant was headed to his daughter's basketball game when suddenly there were some malfunctions. The first 911 call was made about 40 minutes later at 9:47 a.m.

Kobe Bryant was in the NBA since he was 18 and was known for being the youngest basketball player in NBA history. He played for the Los Angeles Lakers his entire basketball career and won five NBA titles with them. He also won two Olympic gold medals for playing with the American team.

Kobe Bryant was a talented man and a loving father. It's as if the world stood still to honor Kobe Bryant's passing in the days following the accident. He was an idol to many. He made a huge impact on the NBA as well as the lives of those who knew him and loved him.

What happened to Bryant and the others on the helicopter was tragic. It broke the hearts of many people around the nation. This will be a day long remembered by many. I pray for Bryant's wife and other children as well as those affected by the deaths of the others.

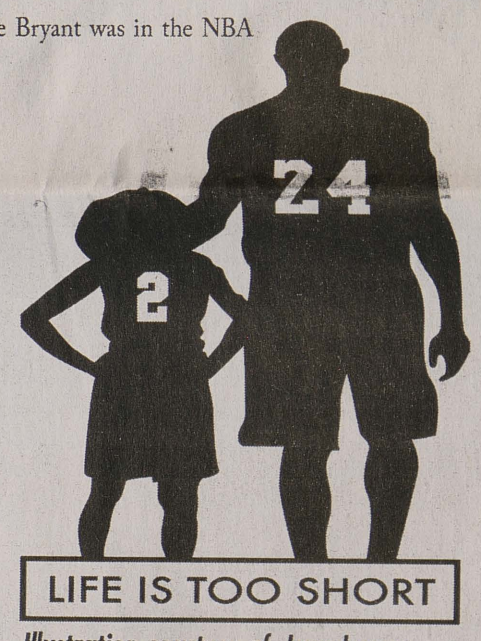


Illustration courtesy of Juan Lesser

Learn the art of Judo with Dr. Ray Meier on campus

By Scott Witcher
Staff Writer

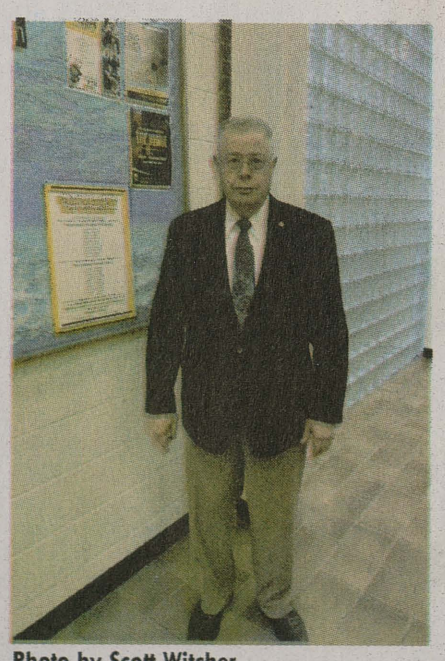


Photo by Scott Witcher

Interested in learning self-defense, yet having fun at the same time? Dr. Ray Meier, a Judo instructor at Tyler Junior College, is offering a Judo class at 6 p.m. on Tuesdays and Thursdays for those ages 6-73.

"Judo can be expressed in one word, which is fun," Meier said.

Prices are $49 for a beginner's class and $110 for intermediate classes per session. Sessions last two months and are offered January through February and March through April.

Meier has been teaching Judo since 1964 and has taught many classes throughout the years. Meier has been at TJC since June 2019. He aims to "reestablish his class" and raise a dojo of students to compete.

It is his intention to teach his new students to "go on to participate in state tournaments, national tournaments, and ultimately in international tournaments, even to the Olympics if possible," Meier said.

For anyone who is interested, Meier is located in the Ornelas Health and Physical Education Center. To register for class, visit www.kajukai.com, or contact Meier at (903) 747 -7277.

APPLY NOW!

YA-A-TE STUDENT LEADER APPLICATIONS ARE NOW OPEN

We're looking for elite students to guide incoming freshmen and returning sophomores, while enhancing their college experience.

APPLICATIONS DUE: Friday, Feb. 14 | 5 p.m.
Apply today at tjc.edu/yaate/leadershipapplication

MANDATORY GROUP INTERVIEWS
Option 1: Monday, Feb. 17 | 2-5 p.m.
Option 2: Tuesday, Feb. 18 | 5-7 p.m.

All applicants must meet a minimum 2.0 GPA requirement, in order to be considered.

Save the date for Ya-A-Te 2020, Aug. 18-21.
Registration will open soon for sophomores!

For more information, contact the Center for Student Life and Involvement at 903-510-2797.
TJC.EDU/YAATE

TJC

THE APACHE ARCHIVES 2020

This week in history Feb. 1 - 7

By Madison Heiser
Copy Editor

Apache Archives is a recurring historical article featuring a timeline of anniversary events for a week. There will be a weekly spotlight interviewing TJC faculty and students on the impact of a highlighted historical event.

Feb. 1

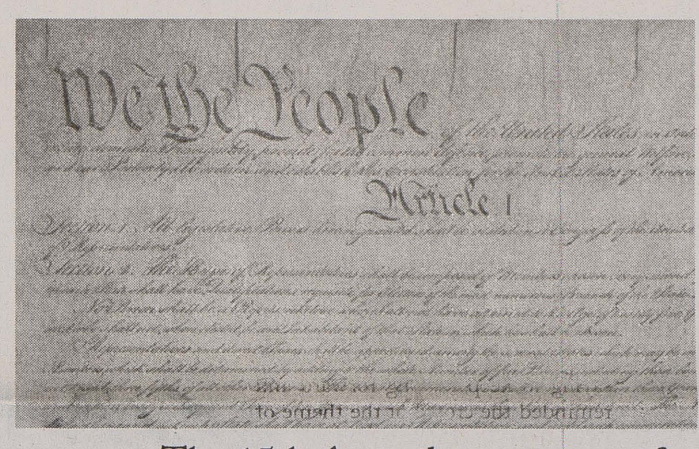
The Greensboro lunch counter sit-ins began in 1960.

Photo by Jack Moebes/ Corbis

Feb. 2

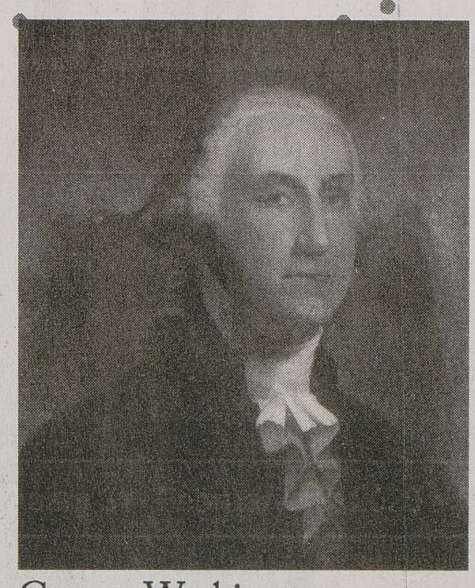
The U.S. acquired Arizona, New Mexico, Texas and California at the end of the Spanish-American War in 1848.

Feb. 3



The 15th Amendment was ratified in 1870, granting men the right to vote regardless of race.

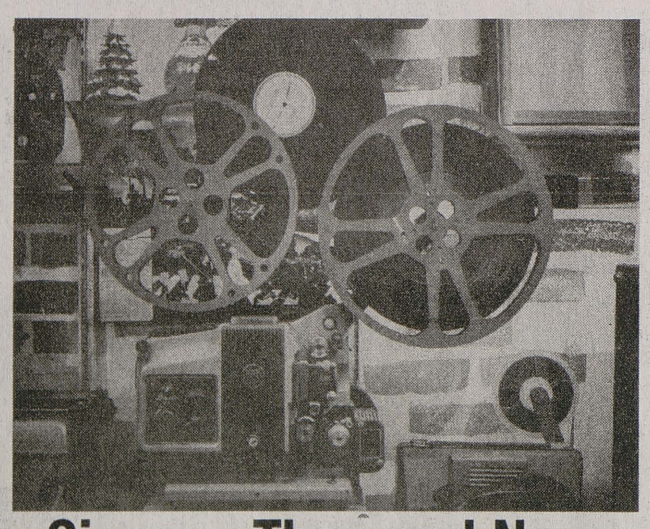
Feb. 4



George Washington was elected as the first U.S. president in 1789.

Feb. 5

The first motion picture was shown to an audience at the Academy of Music in Philadelphia in 1870.



Cinema: Then and Now

By Madison Heiser
Copy Editor

On Feb. 5, 1870, the first motion picture was shown to an audience at the Academy of Music in Philadelphia. Exactly 150 years later, moviegoers look back on the impact motion picture has had on American society.

According to the Motion Picture Association of America, approximately 246 million Americans visited movie theaters at least once in 2016, generating a box office revenue of $11.4 billion in North America alone. In contrast, the Theatre Historical Society of America estimated 2 million Americans who visited movie theaters by 1907, two years after the first public nickelodeon – a theater with an admission cost of five cents – opened in Pittsburgh.

Sophomore TJC student Chiagozie Nwasuruba reflected on the effects of movies today.

"It has grown into a huge, worldwide industry," he said. "I believe that without movies, our society would be pretty boring and bland."

As of 2014, NATO recorded 39,356 movie screens throughout the world, bringing cinema's realm of eclectic culture and ideas to the global population. The popularity of domestic and international film festivals has expanded; these festivals serve as a platform for creativity, expression and advocacy for filmmakers around the globe. Such festivals also provide a stage to debut innovative cinematic technology, including advancements in cinematography, costume and set design, and computer animation.

Aside from a broad societal impact, movies play an intimate role in the lives and homes of countless American families. The same is true for government professor David McClendon, who recalled many childhood memories surrounding his father's management of a movie theater.

"Family movie night is now a regular part of how I have fun with my own wife and children," McClendon said.

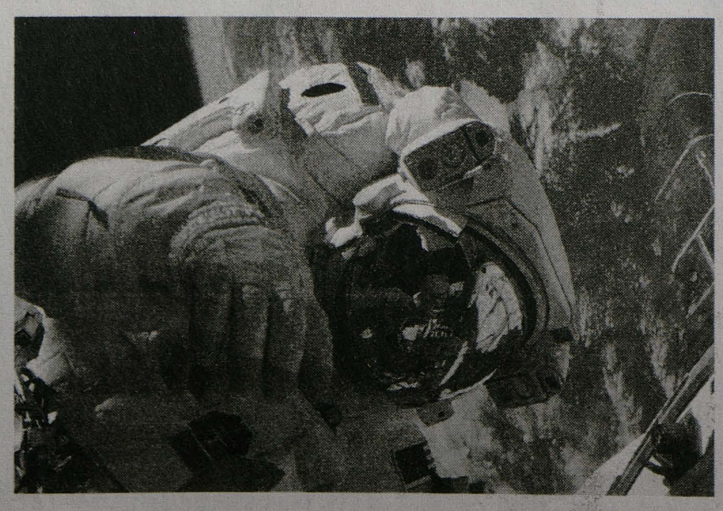
In his opinion, movies provide "a way for us to share stories and information so we can have a shared experience in society; they spark our own imagination by showing us what others have found to be possible, or what others have imagined might be possible."

Cinema continues to develop new stories and innovations, striving to instill a sense of wonder among the global population as it has for more than a century.

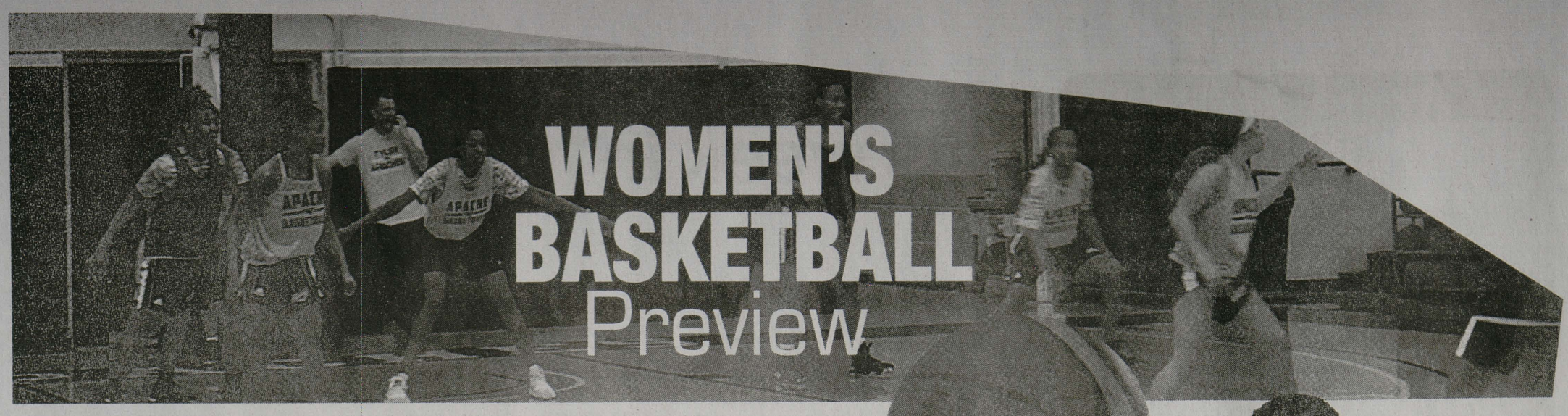
Feb. 6

Queen Elizabeth the II ascended to the British throne in 1952.

Feb. 7



American astronaut Bruce McCandless performed the first untethered spacewalk in 1984.



WOMEN'S BASKETBALL Preview

Shooting for Greatness

Apache women work to maintain conference lead

By Yasmeli Alonso
Sports Editor

TJC women's basketball team is currently in good standing, with 17 wins and 3 losses. Pre-season, which started Nov. 1, 2019, gave them a head start with 10 winnings out of 12 games. TJC lost to New Mexico Junior College and Northwest Florida State College, who are both ranked as one of the top 10 teams in the country.
In conference, TJC stands with only one loss against Trinity Valley whose ranked 2nd as of Jan. 29.

"Our goal is to keep getting better and better every day," Assistant Coach Bryant Porter said.

With 10 games left in conference, there's still potential to win conference.

"Overall, the season is going well. Last year we won 29 games and went to nationals. This year I'm seeing team improvement," Porter said. "We play better as a team. We move the ball better on offense time, but time will tell if we can continue that through the rest of the season."

Preparation is key for any team seeking a win; it sets the tone for the game plan and TJC is quite familiar with it.

"We always go over the techniques of the opposing team, the key elements we need to focus on in the upcoming game, and the possibility that they'll do something different so that we can be prepared to adjust to it," Porter said. "It's a game-by-game thing, but we consider ourselves one of the most prepared teams in the country."

Of course, as any other sport it all starts in practice.

"We have progressed in practice throughout the season. We have a team willing to work every day, which definitely helps," Porter said. "Good attitudes and good energy from the players make our jobs as coaches easier. That way as a coach we can focus on the X's and O's of improving each players' individual technique and use it to make us be better as a team."

Courtesy photo

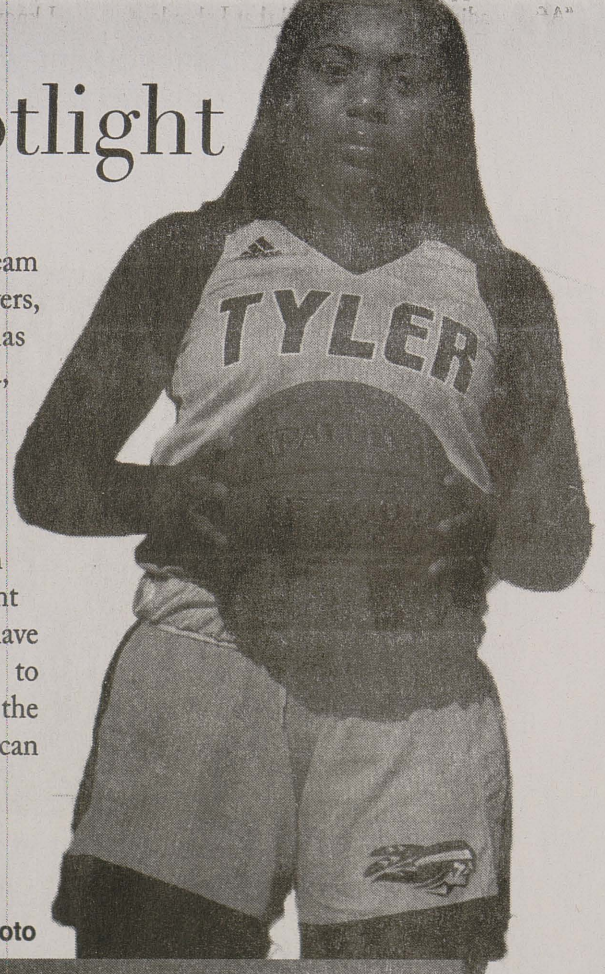
Felmas Koranga

> "We have the chance to do some amazing things this year, and I look forward to the challenges." - Assistant Coach Bryant Porter

Athlete Spotlight

TJC Women's Basketball Team is filled with incredible players, two of which are Felmas Koranga from Rift Valley, Kenya, playing as power forward, and Te'Aire Hambrick from LaRue, Texas, playing as shooting guard.

"They're two of the leading scorers in the conference right now. They both average 20 points a game," Assistant Coach Bryant Porter said. "They have done a good job of getting close to reaching their potential. The sky is the limit for both of them; I think they can take it to another level."



Courtesy photo

Te'Aire Hambrick

Porter talks about Te'Aire Hambrick puts a lot of time in to develop her game. "Te'Aire has put a lot of time into her shot, it's helped her tremendously. Her shooting percentage has gone up," Porter said. "She just day in and day out works very hard in practice, and if you work very hard in practice every single time, it's going to transcend into becoming a better player."

Hambrick started playing basketball when she was four years old, playing through her school and in the A-basketball summer leagues.

Hambrick said TJC reached out to her while she was at a basketball tournament. She liked what the school offered and decided to commit.

Before TJC, Hambrick was a LaPoyner High School standout winning MVP, earned first-team all-district and all-state all four years, but the raft didn't stop there. She came to TJC and made all-conference team and is now leading the conference. Although the recognition feels good, Hambrick said it comes with a lot of pressure.

"It puts a target on your back during games," Hambrick said.

In other interviews, Hambrick expresses how she knows even though people are use to her accomplishments, she still feels the pressure to keep bringing her A-game no matter what.

Contrary from teammate Felmas Koranga, Hambrick says she's glad home is only 45 minutes away from TJC.

"If I ever feel homesick, I just go home," Hambrick said and added she sees that as one of the perks of staying close to home.

Both women are sophomores and are in hopes of transferring to continue their basketball career elsewhere. Koranga said she has offers but doesn't plan on deciding until the end of the season. Hambrick said she doesn't have exclusive offers yet, but knows schools are on the look out for her.

"Sometimes with no offers down yet it makes me wonder where they're at, but I know they'll come," Hambrick said.

Felmas Koranga started playing basketball when she was 16 years old. She heard about the TJC basketball program through a friend who had already played here. Before long, the basketball coaches reached out to Koranga to join.

"My family has always supported me. My elder brother is actually the one that pushed me into playing basketball, but now I feel OK with it. It's like I see the fruit and I'm enjoying it," Koranga said.

Although her home in Kenya is far away, Koranga said the culture shock is not the hardest part.

"Sometimes it's as simple as missing the things you're use to, your people, and the fact that it's a different ball game here, but I love having the opportunity to come to school and play," Koranga said. "I get to travel across the world because of basketball; it makes me feel amazing, and it makes me feel like I'm doing something for my family and myself."

Koranga also reflects on the difference between basketball back home and in the U.S. She explains how it amazes her that here every school has its own basketball court, its indoor and clean. In Kenya, there aren't as many facilities available. She also reflects on how players have different attitudes.

"I don't think most of them are dedicated over there. Here everyone is focused and determined," she said.

Koranga has her own reason to be determined. She's on comeback mode for this season. Last year she suffered a knee injury and has been working her best to come back from it. During the summer, Koranga had the opportunity to go back home. She said she focused on putting more work in so she could get better and is proud to say it really paid off.

"I'm doing better. I'm elevated; I'm almost touching the sky," Koranga said. Her leading score is 30 points in a game.

However, sometimes the "what if" feeling comes back, and the fear she can't be "great anymore" creeps up. Despite these feelings, she keeps her mind on winning the game.

"I usually prepare for games by listening to music; I like to listen to local music," Koranga said she likes to listen to music from Kenya, too. "I come from big beats and it really hypes me up."

She expands on how playing power forward makes her feel comfortable and it gives her confidence.

"You're unpredictable, nobody knows what you'll do," Koranga said. "Sometimes you'll get hit with the signature move and next thing you know I'm already shooting," she laughed.

Porter also spoke on Korangas' improvements. "She had really limited skills last year, but she had willingness to get in the gym." He said she takes coaching well. "She listens to anything you say, she works on her game all the time. That's her biggest improvement just time in the gym and slowing down on offense, being able to pick her spots and basically doing what she wants to do."

Photo by Chuck Merickel

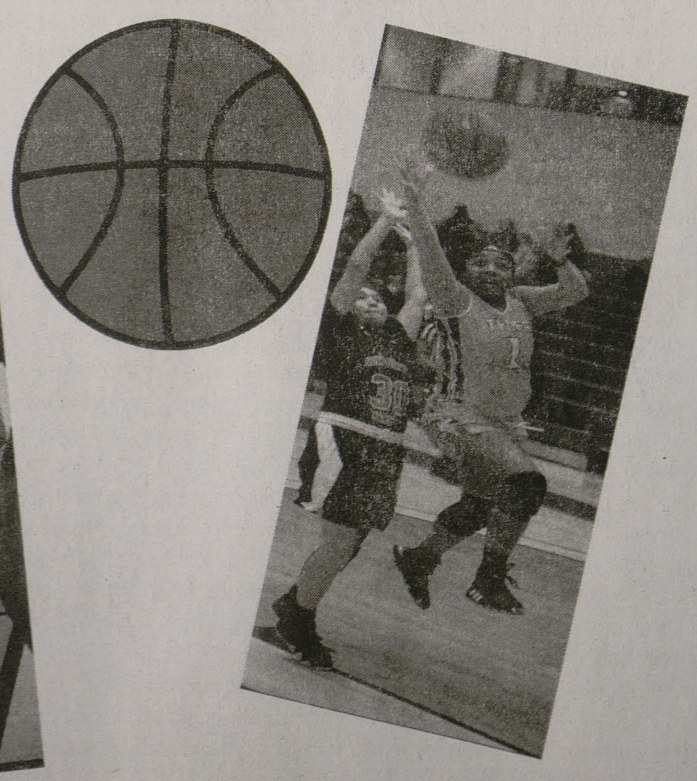


Photo by Chuck Merickel

Pushing Through

Professor tells her journey from being a student to finding her dream job

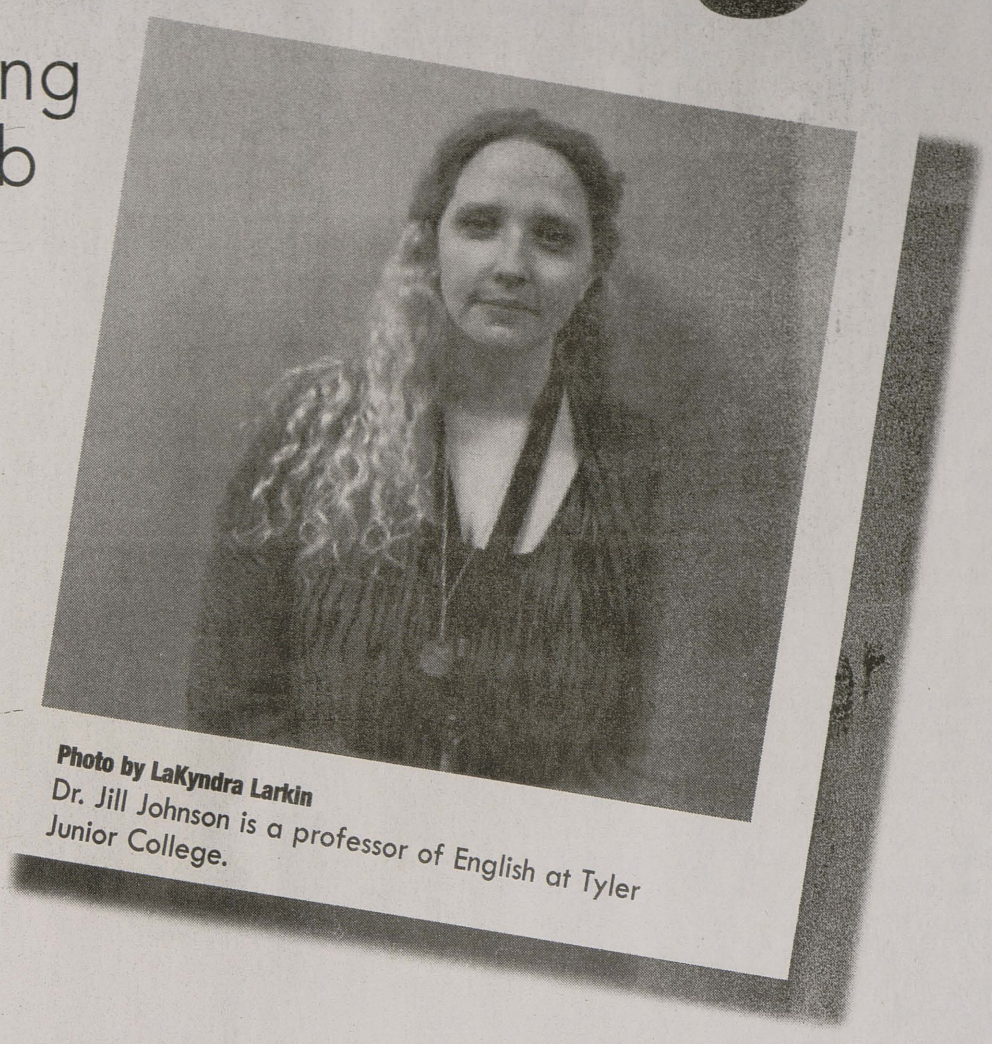


Photo by LaKyndra Larkin
Dr. Jill Johnson is a professor of English at Tyler Junior College.

By LaKyndra Larkin
Contributing Writer

If anyone were to walk into Dr. Jill Johnson's office at Tyler Junior College in Jenkins Hall, they would be able to see the passion she has for the arts and literature.

Her office space is small, but she utilizes her space well. When one first walks in, their eyes would be drawn to a framed picture she captured at a play. Beside that, is a vast collage of drawings saved from her students they have drawn for her. Her desk on either side of her computer is neatly stacked yet cluttered with student assignments, notes, and papers and more frames of ripped copies from books or scripts. She also has a little table set with a chair behind her desk. A bucket of candy is set in the middle of it for anyone to help themselves to.

By the looks of her office, it's clear the passion for literature is there and has always been present in her life. If she had to, she could prove it by the diploma of a doctorate framed on her wall she received in Dec. 2018. Her journey though was not easy, as anyone earning a degree in a graduate program, but how she accomplished her goal is unique in itself, as this is what pushes her to be the best she can be for her students at TJC.

Johnson has a doctorate in studies of literature, and her concentration is philosophical novel, modern, postmodernism and film in adaptation. She is an English professor at TJC and feels as if she has her dream job. This is due to her love of teaching that she initially thought she wouldn't like while earning her master's degree.

"Originally, I got my master's just to do something. I didn't want to get a real job. My school, if you taught for them, they would pay for your school and you would get a small stipend. So, I fell into that kind of accidentally and just loved (teaching) — absolutely loved it," Johnson said, her eyes beaming as she thought about it. "I absolutely loved teaching the first day I taught it. I just thought this is so fun."

Realizing she loved teaching, and after earning her master's from Liberty University in Virginia, Johnson figured she'd go for a doctorate and to also be close to family.

"The job market was scarce, so I figured I'd go for a Ph.D. I went to the University of Texas at Dallas to be close to my grandmother, who was ill at the time," she said.

As she started her journey furthering her education, it seemed similar to a master's degree at first, which was not a huge deal. The workload was similar with the same courses, but because of her location in Dallas, expenses and the cost of living were higher than in Virginia, and things started to get tough for Johnson.

"I didn't have any roommates when I had like five before in Virginia, and I was like, 'Shoot, I need to get a job,'" she said. "So, I got a job as a high school English teacher at Grace."

By this time, things were OK for Johnson. Since she loved teaching and thought high school was OK, she figured she did not need a doctorate because things were getting stressful.

"I had to drive two hours to go to class and back. I was also working full time at the high school, and I was just getting super tired and worn," she said, shaking her head disappointingly. "I couldn't see the value in a Ph. D."

Before losing complete hope, she called her former professor from Liberty University, who was a chair of her master's thesis. Johnson talked to her about how she was feeling and asked her what's the point of a doctorate anyway. Johnson starts to laugh, remembering the phone call.

"She was like, 'Jill—stop! There's more you learn through the Ph.D. work. There's stuff that will bleed into other areas of your life. Even if you don't want to teach at a university. You're probably going to find it valuable.'" Johnson's demeanor changed completely as she explains how she did not care what her professor said. "But I was like, 'Whatever!' and I actually withdrew from the school."

Johnson wanting to quit is not surprising in the graduate program. According to an article from United States Census Bureau, in 2018, 48.2 million people graduated with a bachelor's degree, but that number significantly drops to 4.5 million people completing a doctorate. Many drop out due to the demands of a doctorate degree or right before the dissertation. Johnson tried to seek support from her fellow colleagues in the program, but they had all dropped out.

"If you accomplish a big thing, treat yourself. My parents always made me feel special when I accomplished something." -Dr. Jill Johnson

Feeling alone, Johnson had to tell her dean at UT-Dallas about the news. When she told him she was dropping out, he told her he was going to hold off on dropping her entirely for a week and that if he had not heard from her within that week, he would drop her. He believed she could do it and did not want her to give up.

Knowing this, Johnson explains it's the little things that made her want to quit. She still had to drive two hours and back for class, worked full time at the high school, and things were difficult. If she needed help from her professors, she'd have to call and meet them at awkward times of the day or meet at their house. This was a pain for her and because she was so shy "there was just so much extra work. There's a lot of anxiety in things that some people may be strong in, and I do not because I am shy," she said. "But when you're working on your Ph.D., you have to reach out to your professors and ask them to be on your committee and do special stuff for you. That was tough."

During that week of feeling lost and ready to quit everything, Johnson emailed one more professor about her decision of wanting to quit. After realizing so many people were rooting for her and considering all the conversations she had with her professors, she knew their motivation is what kept her from dropping out.

"After reading a lengthy email that I shouldn't drop, I knew I had the support to make it through. It meant the world to me, and it was just so amazing to realize that," Johnson said, touching her heart.

Johnson kept working toward her doctorate. Even with the support around her, that did not change the coursework.

"The dissertation was super painful because you have to keep editing it. You have to keep working at it. But in the end, it felt so great to be done," she said, smiling remembering finally completing the program. "I'd really recommend it to anyone interested. This is what my chair said to me, and I think it's true. 'Everyone in the Ph.D. program has a day, not that they're just thinking about dropping, they are literally dropping. They have to talk themselves out of it or have someone else to talk them out of it. It's so easy to get overwhelmed with everything.'"

Finally, in Dec. 2018, Johnson graduated with her doctorate in literature. She describes the day she got her diploma and walking the stage; she was grateful she had the support not to give up.

"It was so amazing. I always recommend walking the stage. My parents took me out for cake at my favorite cake place in Dallas. I even bought myself season tickets to the Dallas All-Star game," she said, laughing embarrassed about her reward. "If you accomplish a big thing, treat yourself. My parents always made me feel special when I accomplished something."

Johnson is now an English professor at TJC, enjoying her job and being able to do what she loves. Because of her success, her students recognize it and enjoy her classes and find her as a true inspiration.

"Dr. Johnson was nice, and I like how she would really get into her lectures. I remember one time I had a situation, and I couldn't make it to class, so I emailed her, and we talked in person. She was very understanding and kind. She's a sweet professor, and I know she'll continue to grow into being a greater one in the future," said Nautica Jackson, a former student of Johnson's English class.

Many doors are opening for Johnson since she'd earned her doctorate. Johnson explains she enjoyed her journey and it still continues.

"I like my journey. Even with almost withdrawing, I feel like I have a sense of control," Johnson said. "I even got chosen to represent TJC in Poland for a professor exchange program." She beams excited for the trip, happy for the opportunity TJC has given her for being an excellent professor in her field. "It'll be next spring for a week, and I'll guest lecture, which is really exciting, and I don't have to pay for it at all. I see myself at TJC for a long time."

Johnson's love for teaching is shown everywhere she goes and through her lectures. Earning a doctorate is a milestone Johnson will treasure for years to come. Although it was not easy, she does not regret anything that happened.

"Don't be stopped by hard stuff, and don't do everything at once," she said. "The trick to finishing is to take things in slow chucks rather than all together and plan ahead. Seek a support system and always walk the stage. It's amazing, and it's really a special moment."

DB

Meetings are 2:30 p.m. Tuesdays in Jenkins, Room 1108.

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Column: Australia fires damage country, endanger species

By Emily Niebuhr
Staff writer

Here we are again – hearing about another big wildfire – when just last January we were reading about the fires in the Amazon. According to greenpeace.org as of Jan. 22, Australia is still burning and at least 29 people and an estimated 1 billion animals have died, and 17.1 million acres of land, which is two-thirds of the size of the United Kingdom, is destroyed.

Get your tissues out for this part because it's hard to hear. Kangaroo Island, a wildlife sanctuary known for its biodiversity, has lost 50,000 of its koalas due to the fires. It amazes me that despite the fact they're dropping water on the fire, it keeps burning.

Last June, Australia started burning and the fires are still ongoing. According to Business Insider, "Australia has become an inferno. More than half of the country is choking on smoke, and the skies glow orange as bushfires continue to ravage the continent."

There have been fires in every Australia state, but New South Wales was hit the hardest, which includes Sydney and Melbourne, according to CNN.

Because it is summer there, the rising heat is making conditions worse and difficult to get the fires under control. The Australian weather bureau has confirmed that Australia dealt with the driest, warmest temperatures on record, which has greatly contributed to the wildfires this summer.

Also in Australia the bushfire season begins in the spring, which made hot and dry circumstances worse. The rainfall was 40% lower across the country last year, according to greenpeace.org.

I believe the environment can change when drought causes increasingly devastating events like wildfires and loss of animal and plant life. Apparently the fires started months before they usually start, and continued to be violent during the unprecedented drought and undefinable heat.

I know if I lived there with the windy conditions and heavy smoke, it would be difficult to breathe, much less go to work and school. I applaud those who are bracing the flames to fight the fires.

Even though it's far away, we can still help them out anyway we are able. We all need to do whatever we can for the welfare of this land: pray for more rain, lower temperatures and less wind. You see more celebrities taking action, which is good because others will follow their lead. If you can, donate. It doesn't matter how much you donate because at least it's something, and you are helping Australia.

Some safe ways to donate:

- **WWF.org (you can even adopt a koala bear)**
- **Australia Red Cross**
- **Salvation Army Australia**
- **World Wildlife fund**

Illustration by Juan Lesser

Column: Searching for truth: fallacies invade political media

By Madison Heiser
Copy Editor

We witness censorship in the media, in some form, every day of our lives. Scenes of violence and vulgar language are blurred from view in online articles, television and popular social media websites. However, perhaps the most dangerous type of censorship has grasped the bulk of American society in the modern age: the omission of truth via political media outlets. Such omission serves to fuel the phenomena of political polarization and the adoption of a "mob mentality" on various sides of the political spectrum.

The definition of censorship itself has evolved from the practice of protecting consumers from vulgarity to effectively herding those same consumers into specified areas of political opinion. Media outlets are aware that we, as consumers, normally choose to avoid those opinions and clips of information that tend to make us uncomfortable — a fact which they use to their advantage.

Recently, both liberal and conservative news platforms have become increasingly more polarized, intentionally misleading viewers to adopt a belief or set of beliefs that align with their own, sometimes to the extent of radicalism. Though this practice of spreading propaganda has existed as long as any form of government, modern forms of media have made it easier for biased outlets to access a consumer base — in this instance, the politically involved American public.

Additionally, targeted advertisements and paid promotions have allowed propaganda to seep into the eyeline of the public in a less blatant manner meaning citizens see these advertisements every hour, scrolling through social media, commuting to their jobs and getting their fix of "reality" television. A wise high school government teacher once taught a classroom full of today's budding political activists, "if you are not buying something, you are the product."

Here is where we turn our attention toward the product itself: the public. Once we become accustomed to feeding off of a certain variation of political bias, we become less inclined to adopt a unique perspective toward the issue at hand. We become so used to being "bought," made comfortable within our one-sided, rose-colored world view, the simple notion of an alternative perspective makes us uncomfortable, angry, even. Biased media has become the fast food in a society where cooking up the truth has become too much work. Therefore, even the most misleading information is accepted as truth without the slightest form of investigation. Though, in part, the media is to blame for the rise and significance of political polarization, it is the duty of responsible, politically educated consumers to seek out the truth, the facts, themselves.

In today's society, it has become a virtue to rely more on oneself and individual research than to immediately trust those outlets who have made you into a product to be purchased. More and more Americans have come to sell their autonomy in exchange for convenience.

The unfiltered, untwisted truth has come to be defined as provocation. Now is the time for us, as American citizens on the brink of another presidential election, to be introspective and to ask ourselves, why does the truth make us uncomfortable? When will we remove our collective blindfold, separate the reliable from unreliable, and refuse to be bought? To shed light on the untainted truth is the first step to inciting change in a modern America, a nation now fraught with violence, propaganda and unwavering division. It is the responsibility of all generations to advocate for political awareness and restore a sense of unity and trust among American citizens.

Have an opinion? Share it with us by writing a guest column or a letter to the editor.

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- The Drumbeat invites its readers to share views by writing letters to the editor.
- All contributions will be edited for grammar, spelling, length (300 words maximum), profanity and personal attacks.
- All letters must include the author's name, address, telephone number and academic classification.
- Editors reserve the right to deny publication of any letter.

Email letters to news@thedrumbeat.com or bring to Jenkins 1114 B.

Review: Eminem's album is not anything to ride home over

By Michael Bald
Entertainment Editor

Guess who's back? Iconic rapper Eminem has just dropped his new album "Music to be Murdered by," featuring guest artists such as Juice Wrld, Ed Sheeran and more. With this album coming out of the blue for many, fans were hoping for a great new album ever since his album "Revival" was met with harsh criticisms.

Does the album deliver? Honestly, not really.

The majority of the songs left me wanting to hit the skip button. I'll admit I'm not a die-hard fan of Eminem but the man has talent. All of his work, especially in the early 2000s, had such a unique way of constructing beats and melodies. His lyrics, whether they were humorous or serious, are in some way memorable or straight-up genius. After listening to this album, I'm left scratching my head wondering what on earth happened.

The album has little snippets of Alfred Hitchcock narrating upcoming songs that added to the horror aesthetic of the album. However, looking back, I do think this choice was for style over substance. The album has songs dealing with harsh themes, but I don't think his lyrics this time around were up to par with what he's known for.

Many of the songs, such as "Unaccommodating" and "Marsh," have the bland beat pattern of chimes and sub-base beats heard on many other songs today. One of the songs that had a more humorous touch was the track "Godzilla," where he does his typical fast rap style like in his song "Rap God." He collaborates with the recently passed Juice Wrld, but I'm afraid to say every time he came on I was waiting for it to get back to Eminem.

Another song called "Stepdad" is where he talks about his childhood and how his stepdad would beat him. While this is a dark subject matter, he doesn't seem to treat it like that. I believe he was going for a juxtaposed tone and trying to make it slightly humorous with certain lyrics but it just comes across as confusing and uncomfortable.

This album does have two diamonds in the rough: "Darkness" and "Leaving Heaven," which sound like classic deep Eminem. The song "Darkness" appears to be written about Eminem and his history with mental health problems and how pills made him want to commit acts of violence. There is a plot twist in the song and music video when you realize he's actually talking about the shooter from the Las Vegas shooting in 2017. It ends with a link to make legislation pass on gun laws in the country. I'll admit it is well written, and the plot twist was very powerful.

"Leaving Heaven" was about how he had a rough childhood and how he's been messed up at this point because of it. He begins a rant toward the middle of the song where he blames his dad for all the bad times he went through because his dad left him and was never there to comfort him. Toward the end of the song, he goes all out with his emotions and tells his dad how he truly feels about him. It was heartbreaking and powerful. That song was probably the best on the album, both from a melodic and lyrical perspective. It's a shame the other songs on this track couldn't live up to these two.

Eminem seems to be trying to appeal to a modern crowd while still trying to capture the spark that ignited his career. I felt "Darkness" and "Leaving Heaven" were the only real songs with any weight. As for the other songs, let's just say they can take a seat.

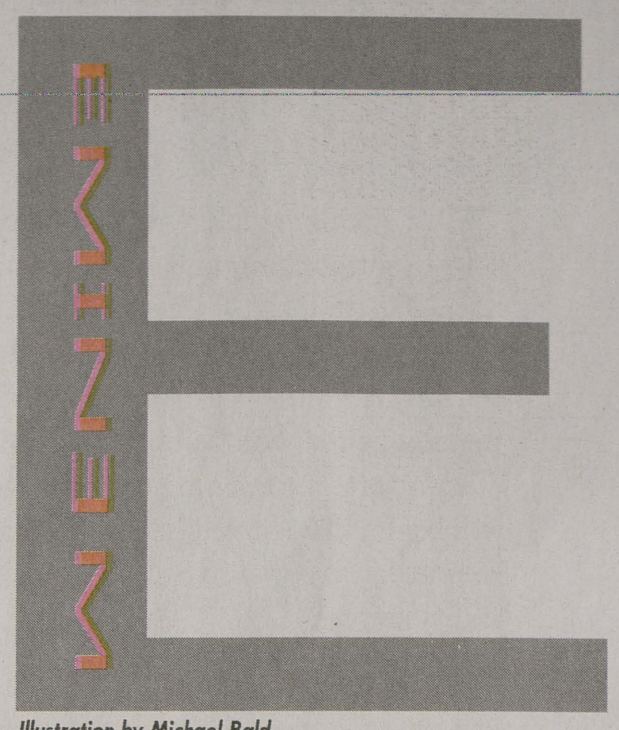


Illustration by Michael Bald

Review: 'Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker' fails to meet fan expectations

By Zac Brooks
Editor-in-Chief

Hello there. "Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker" was nothing short of a dumpster fire in my opinion. For starters, there were multiple unexplained plot points, they used an enemy from the original trilogy and even disrespected Anakin Skywalker turned Darth Vader.

Looking back, I see this movie could have been its own film with no link to the original trilogy whatsoever and I would have been none the wiser. But alas, Disney marketed this film as "The final movie in the Skywalker saga," thus showing me that it is linked to the movies everyone has grown to love. With that link in mind, I realized "The Rise of Skywalker" does not live up to the hype.

The thing that made me semi-enjoy the movie was Adam Driver's role as Kylo Ren. His acting was good for what he was working with. Rey's character still felt forced (pun intended). All in all, I was not impressed with the turn out.

If you want to go and see it for yourself, then do it. It's worth watching at least once.

The movie itself from a stand-alone standpoint wasn't bad. If it wasn't linked to the saga, then I would even say I enjoyed it.

There were many good things about the movie that were executed well and left me with goosebumps. Because I'm trying to keep this review spoiler free, I will not say what left me with a feeling of such glee.

Photo by Disney and Lucasfilm

Photo by Universal Pictures

Review: '1917' is a technical landmark, an engaging story for cinema-goers

By Sorayda Rivera
Staff Writer

From the director of "Skyfall," Sam Mendez strikes again with his film "1917," an epic war movie set during World War I.

The movie follows two British soldiers, Lance Corporals Blake (Dean-Charles Chapman) and Schofield (George MacKay), who are tasked with an incredible mission to deliver a message miles away from their trench to another company's trench through no man's land and dangerous enemy territory. The message is to call off an attack and attempt to save the lives of 1,600 British soldiers, including Blake's older brother.

For the next two hours the audience embarks on this gut-wrenching journey of these two ordinary soldiers enduring extraordinary situations in the selfless act of saving their comrades lives.

The movie was filmed as if it was shot in a single take. The transitions from scene to scene are almost seamless. I had to keep myself from biting my nails off through almost the entire film. I felt like I was right there with the characters in the middle of their arduous journey. I could feel the actors' pain and their sadness. The sight of the hundreds of dead bodies was disturbing.

The movie "1917" is being nominated for 159 awards, including 10 Oscar nominations. One of the nominations is for cinematography, and it is well deserved. The imagery in this film is so meaningful, and everything has its place. The movie starts with the two main protagonists having a peaceful nap on a beautiful field under a big shady tree. To me, this symbolized how the rest of the film was going to go. This first scene was the calm before the storm.

In one scene, the main protagonist is running for his life without his helmet or rifle, and the sound of bullets ricocheting off the walls and surroundings had me ducking in my seat and my heart beating out of my chest.

It really is an incredible film. I left the theater speechless. It left me thinking about how life can be over in such a short moment. After watching this film, I feel more desensitized to this world than when I went in.

Also, "1917" gave me more respect for veterans who have fought for their country's freedoms. It amazes me to think about what these men and women go through after having life-changing experiences that come with war. To think that they must re-establish their lives after seeing that much trauma must be excruciating.

Go see "1917," this is a beautiful movie of selflessness and honor. You will not regret it!

"...the audience embarks on this gut-wrenching journey..."

Review: 'The Witcher' falls flat at both fantasy, entertainment

By Michael Bald
Entertainment Editor

"The Witcher" is a new show that just hit Netflix. It stars Henry Cavill and is a story based on the video game and book series of the same name. It follows the adventures of Gerald, who is a Witcher. Witchers, for those who don't know, are people who hunt monsters and get ridiculed by people of the world because of who they are.

Sounds interesting? Well, it's not. It's incredibly boring and confusing.

I heard comparisons between this show and Game of Thrones before, but I decided to go in knowing that it probably wouldn't compare. After watching it, I needed expectations lowered.

By far the biggest problem with this show is the writing. It breaks one of the most important rules of writing a story, which is show, don't tell. Characters in the show are constantly telling us who they are and why they do the things they do. When you outright tell the audience how to feel, it will result in them not caring. I never once in the show got a feeling of who anyone was or what their motivation was. They constantly tell us to care, but they never show us a reason why we should.

A big reason why people seem to like this show is because it's apparently faithful to the original source material. However, for those who have no idea about the story of this character, they won't have a clue what's going on. After the first episode, I had to watch a 12 minute video explaining everything that was referenced and the purpose of each character's actions. When characters aren't explaining who they are, they're talking about the backstory of their current location or explaining nonsensical magic.

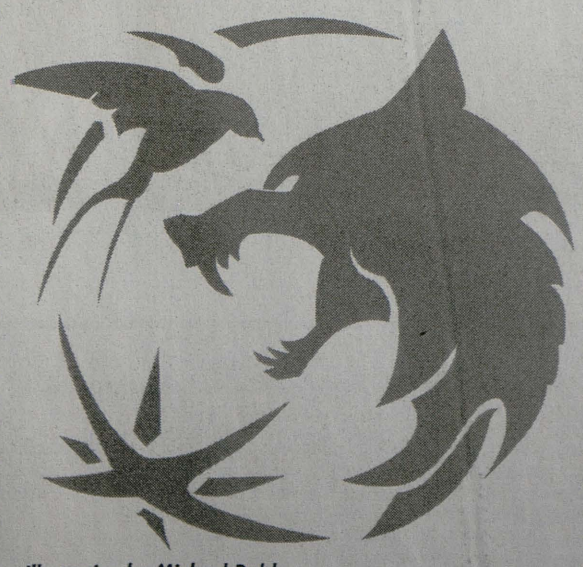


Illustration by Michael Bald

Another thing, the magic in this show is vague in its explanation of how characters get or have certain abilities. For example, there is one character played by Anya Chalotra who has powers for some reason and ends up in this school of magic because her father sold her to a witch or something... to train and do... something...

Are you confused? Welcome to the club!

This show is also clearly trying to ride off the success of "Game of Thrones." However, it seems the writers of "The Witcher" have no clue what made that show so great. "Game of Thrones" took its time establishing its characters and gave us reasons as to why we should care. Grand battles in that show feel more powerful than this because things were expertly built up to those conflicts. Too much, too fast will only frustrate or bore an audience.

As far as positives, the show has an excellent production value. The costumes and sets are all top notch. Henry Cavill is also very charismatic in the role of Gerald. He brings a very charming and at times a dry humor through some line delivery. Everything gets held back though because of its writing and characters.

I guess I would recommend it to those who have played the games or read the book because you might understand what's happening. As for the rest of us, might I suggest avoiding it at all costs?

For more information, visit thedrumbeat.com or connect with us on social media. Follow our entertainment editor on Instagram@michaelthecinefile.

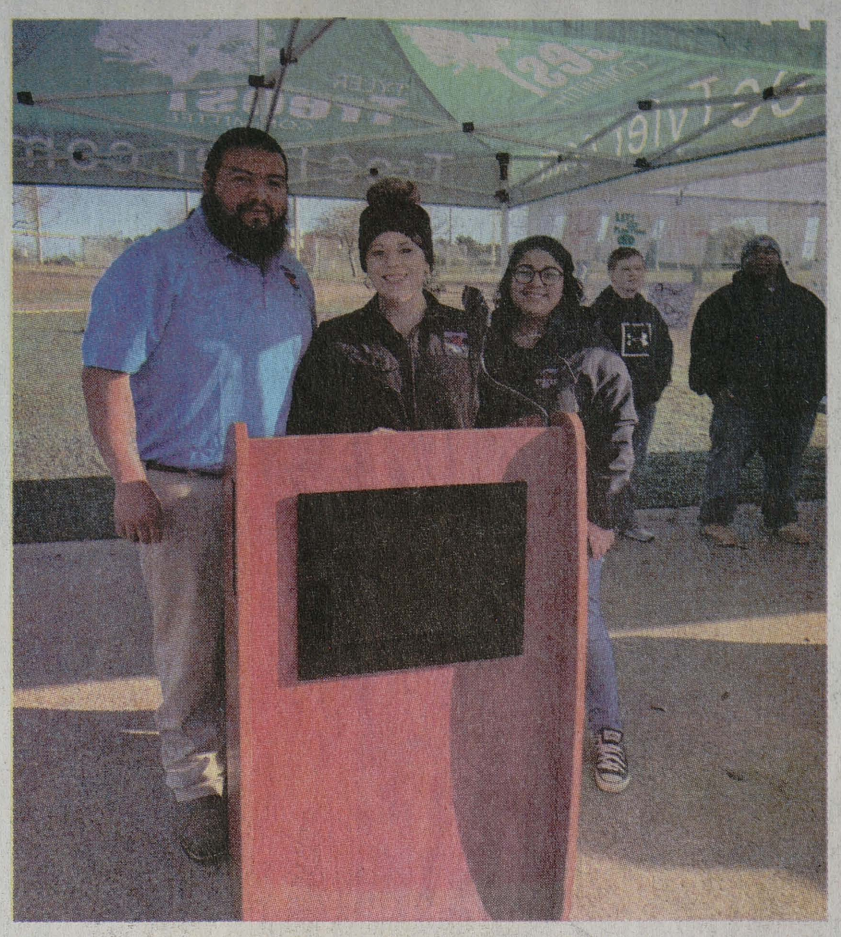
Volunteers break ground on Arbor Day

By Cecilia Kohl
Design Editor

Looking to volunteer and help out the planet? Volunteers from Tyler and surrounding towns showed up at Faulkner Park in Tyler and planted more than 20 trees on Jan. 25.

Coming up on Feb. 8, an Arbor Day event will be hosted at TJC North starting at 9 a.m. in Lindale at 75 Miranda Lambert Way. One can register at the booths that will be hosted by Tyler Tree Committee.

At 10 a.m. the opening ceremony will start, and at 10:30 a.m. tree planting will begin. Lunch will be provided at the closing ceremony. Do not forget that volunteers receive a free T-shirt, and there will be door prizes for all who come and volunteer.

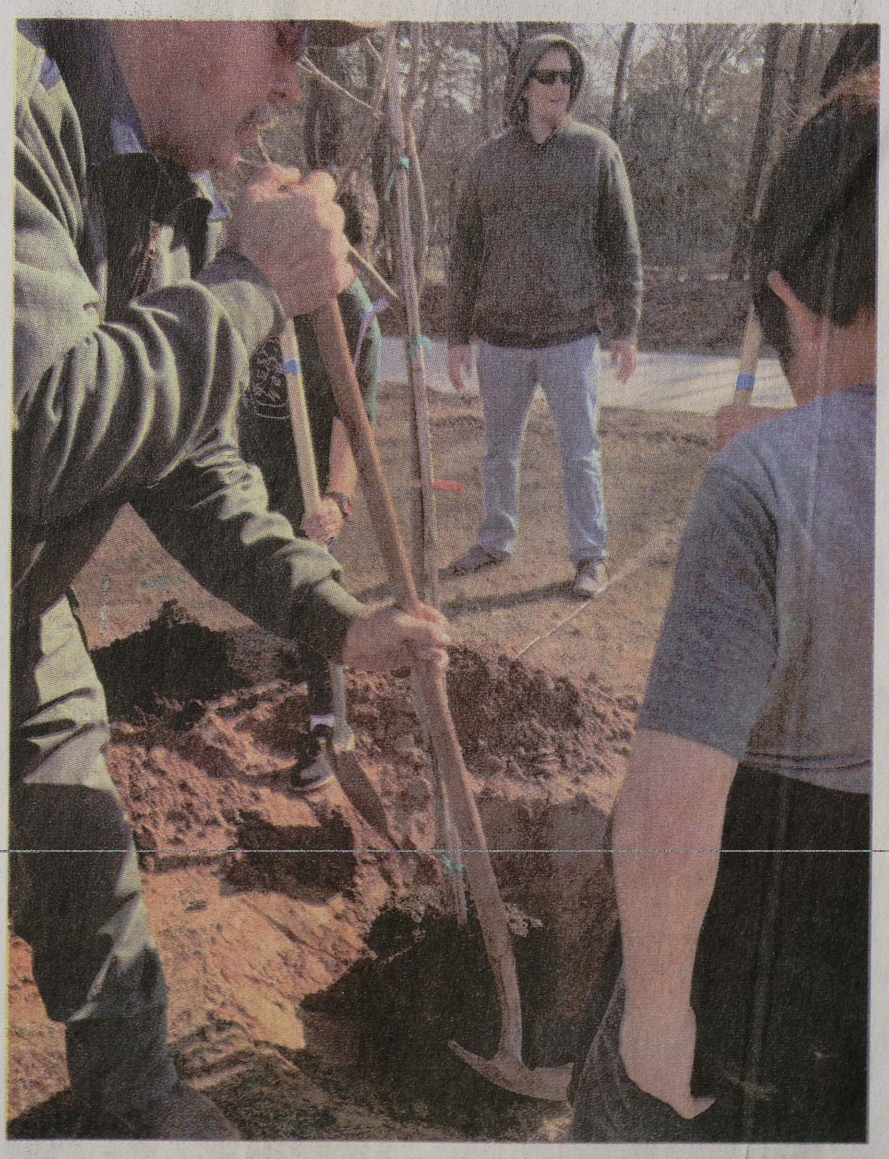


From left to right: Guillermo Soto, Leanne Robinette and Adriana Rodriguez offer information to volunteers on where to go and where to be for the Arbor Day festivities.

Volunteers break ground on Arbor Day by digging a bowl to place a tree in.

A mother and daughter get ready to take pictures next to the tree they helped plant.

Volunteers pass out free T-shirts to volunteers who helped plant trees.



A Forest Ranger helps arrange trees with Tyler volunteers.

All photos by Cecilia Kohl

Vironica Toler, volunteer, helps others plant seeds into containers to take home to sprout and plant at their own homes.

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